

COMMANDER'S HATCH

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Post AWE Observations

Now that the Task Force XXI Advanced Warfighting Experiment (TFXXI AWE) is behind us, and Fort Hood and TRADOC personnel are simultaneously breathing sighs of relief and hustling to get everything in place for the Division XXI AWE in November, I believe it is appropriate to present my assessment of the TFXXI AWE. Echoing what you have probably already heard about the NTC portion of the AWE, I believe it was an amazingly successful rotation that provided a valuable training opportunity for the 1st BCT, 4th ID, and clearly demonstrated the great potential of many experimental and future digital systems and concepts. Our collective challenge today is to take the emerging lessons of the TFXXI AWE, analyze these lessons, determine their impact, and ensure that the correct lessons are properly incorporated into current and future requirements documents, doctrine, and training systems.

I am convinced that digitized equipment enhances the combat capability of modernized warfighting organizations. However, digitization is not, of itself, the key to future battlefield success. Soldiers, leaders, and units must continue to be well-trained in the basics and experienced in order to fully leverage the capabilities of current and future digitized systems. The 1st BCT was challenged before the NTC rotation by ever-evolving hardware and software delivery schedules and widely varying levels of system functionality. Despite these challenges, they successfully conducted a wide range of train-

ing events in preparation for the NTC. They also benefited from a week-long shakeout phase at the NTC that enabled them to both stress their digitized systems prior to the rotation and conduct additional collective training. With the home station training challenges that all of our rotating units encounter today, incorporation of a similar shakeout training period in future NTC rotations might be of benefit to any rotating unit. Hats off to the professionalism and flexibility of the NTC.

The 1st BCT's NTC rotation also highlighted the continued value of the NTC. The Army has made a tremendous investment in this facility, to include recent upgrades to the NTC instrumentation systems. The OPFOR (11th ACR) remains the most formidable and well-trained force in the world, but they also require equipment modernization. We must all strive to make the most of this unique training capability. There is no other opportunity, aside from a real-world combat operation, that stresses and stretches a unit like the NTC. The assistance provided by experienced observer/controller (OC) teams further magnifies the already high value of training at the NTC. For all of these reasons, it was appropriate that the NTC was the "test" venue for this experiment, and we must continue to consider its similar use in future experiments.

If we have any chance of successfully fighting with a digitized force, we must start today to grow and train the digital

force of tomorrow. I am convinced that individual and collective training was under-resourced throughout this experiment, and the trend will probably continue in the Division AWE. There were some great successes in training during the AWE, however, which illustrate that we have a strong existing nucleus here at Ft. Knox for future digital training development: the Force XXI Training Program (FXXITP). We provided a series of training support packages (TSP) for the EXFOR, based on FXXITP products. While these constructive and virtual training products were significantly modified to meet the EXFOR's unique organizational and equipment characteristics, the baseline products are usable by any armored or mechanized unit. The challenge is to keep these products current, and to expand them to address the collective training requirements of all Battlefield Operating Systems (BOS) within the digital division. We must also address the special training requirements for future digital leaders. The TRADOC Commander has discussed the need to develop a Digital Leader's Reaction Course (DLRC) to help train digital leaders; I believe we have the baseline for the DLRC today within the various components of the Force XXI Training Program — the challenge is securing and sustaining adequate resources to further refine these 21st century training tools.

Although most individual digital systems performed well during the TFXXI AWE, we must remember that most of

these systems were experimental prototypes, or early versions of fielded systems. The M1A1 with appliqué is not an objective system; our ability to operate in a digital environment cannot be evaluated solely on the AWE performance of less than fully integrated prototype systems. The objective requirement is for fully integrated combat systems, with integrated situational awareness, target acquisition and location, direct fire, and target handoff systems, supported by high bandwidth, long-range secure communications systems. The Force XXI Battle Command Brigade and Below (FBCB2) system is the key platform component within fully integrated digital combat systems, and we have already modified FBCB2 requirements based on emerging insights from the TFXXI AWE. Our future direct-fire fights must be built around a strong backbone of internally and externally integrated digital combat systems — the M1A2SEP tank, the M2A3 Bradley, and the Apache Longbow — all utilizing FBCB2 as their embedded digital command and control system. Fielding these modernized digital combat systems is essential to achieving the full capabilities of the objective Force XXI Division. Along with showing the potential value of these fully digitized

integrated systems, the AWE also demonstrated that the future digital force must be resourced with adequate quantities of dismounted infantry (the 2 X 9 + 5 initiative), dismounted soldiers with usable digitized systems (Land Warrior), modernized mortars in all maneuver task forces, improved night vision devices (Own the Night), improved reconnaissance platforms with modernized acquisition capabilities (FSCS and LRAS3/HS3), refined Combat Service Support (CSS) capabilities through proliferation of the Palletized Loading System (PLS) with Movement Tracking System (MTS), and robust data radios.

Two TFXXI AWE organizational initiatives deserve specific comment: the Brigade Reconnaissance Troop (BRT) and CSS Reorganization. The BRT was a success during the AWE because it enabled the 1st BCT to emplace ground reconnaissance assets throughout the depth of the battlefield, and, in coordination with other advanced aerial and ground surveillance systems, establish and maintain an unprecedented level of observation on the OPFOR. Of equal importance were reduced taskings on TF scouts due to the presence of the BRT. Unencumbered, the TF

scouts were extremely effective in fulfilling their traditional role — providing the security for the task force. While we need to continue to refine the organization, equipment, and doctrine of the BRT, it is clearly a winner. Discussion on CSS reorganization is an emotional issue. The Forward Support Company (FSC) may pay off with its hypothesized benefits once all the necessary enabling initiatives are available. Any assessment of this initiative is premature, as it was not fully exercised or stressed during the TFXXI AWE. We must wait for further modeling, testing, and analysis before a final decision is made regarding this organizational change.

Finally, I cannot overpraise the efforts of the 1st BCT throughout the entire AWE process. This organization worked tirelessly to ensure the successful execution of the AWE and has established a high standard for performance by any unit, digital or otherwise. The leaders and soldiers of this talented organization deserve all the accolades they have received for their key role in the AWE.

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